Applications

Application Tips

DO:

- Be accurate
- Be Informative
- Be complete
- Be specific
- Be honest
- Print neatly
- Check spelling and grammar
- Sign the application

DON'T:

- Cross out writing
- Misspell words
- Leave unanswered questions
- Wrinkle or fold the application
- Turn the application in late
- Mention health, personal, legal or financial problems

Applications

Employment applications are an important part of the hiring process. Many employers require an application as the first step to employment. Other employers may not require an application until later in the employment process. Still other employers may never require an application. No matter when an application is requested, it is an important job search tool. It is used to evaluate you as a prospective employee and is an opportunity to show your qualifications.

Employers use the application to collect information about your qualifications and to compare you to other applicants—often to determine which candidates will be offered an interview. Most employers receive hundreds and even thousands of applications each year. The reality is that employers screen out most applications and read only those that catch their attention and those that successfully show the qualifications and skills an employer wants. Therefore, it is important to do everything possible to create the "perfect application." Listed below are some suggestions.

VISUAL IMPACT—The application should be neat with no errors in grammar or spelling. When completing a paper application, be sure to print neatly and use black ink. Whether completing a paper or on-line application respond to all the questions, avoid abbreviations and use N/A (Not applicable) if the section does not apply to you.

In addition, be sure to specifically describe and quantify your job descriptions and skills.

Be sure to print neatly and avoid spelling errors. Use black ink and respond to all questions.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS—Read the entire application before you begin and print online applications. Pay close attention to what is being asked and how you are expected to respond. Pay attention to and honor those sections that say "Do Not Write Below This Line" or Office Use Only." Carefully read "Optional" sections and decide if it is in your best interest to provide this information.

BE POSITIVE—On the application you want to present a positive picture of yourself. Avoid any negative information, especially personal, legal, health or financial problems. Look for ways to show that you are the right person for the job. Expound on your positive character traits and think about what you would look for in an employee.

BE HONEST—It is important to be truthful on an application. The information you provide will become a permanent part of your employment record when hired. False information can be a basis for dismissal. However, do not volunteer more information than the employer is seeking or is necessary to show your qualifications.

TARGET YOUR QUALIFICATIONS—It is imperative that you do research and look for ways to target your qualifications to the specific requirements of the job. It is also useful to target the work philosophy and culture of the organization.

PREPARE A "MASTER APPLICATION"—Preparation for completing a job-winning application begins at home. Take the time to gather and organize the information you need including education, employment history (plus addresses, phone numbers, previous supervisor, dates; etc,) specific and concise descriptions of previous job duties, a list of significant skills, and reference information. This information can be used to complete a personal data sheet or "Master Application" to use whenever you contact an employer and complete an application.

POSITION DESIRED—State the specific position title featured on the job announcement or state a specific position title and department. Never leave this question blank or do not reply with "any" or "open." The employer will not take the time to figure out where you fit in their organization. If you do not know the job title, state the department in which you want to work. If you are interested in more than one job, fill out more than one application.

SALARY REQUIREMENTS—When asked about salary requirements, it is best to respond with "Open" or "Negotiable." However, online applications often require a specific amount to be listed, so do research and list a range if possible or list an amount a couple of steps higher (e.g. 5–10 percent) than you are willing to accept.

REASONS FOR LEAVING—When stating why you left a job, avoid terms like "Fired," "Quit, Illness or Personal Reasons." Such terms may screen you out of the opportunity to interview where you can talk about your reasons for leaving in a more controlled and connecting environment. Use statements that indicate you chose to move forward and look for positive statements as to why you left a job such as "Looking for More Responsibility or Opportunities," "Seeking Advancement," "Seeking a More Challenging Position," "Seeking to Expand Skills," "Reduction in Force" or "Job Change." Choose the statement that most accurately describes your situation and be prepared to discuss your reason in more detail.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS—Some applications may contain questions that are tricky or even illegal. These may include questions about age, gender, disabilities, health, marital status, children, race and criminal convictions. And, many online applications will not allow you to continue forward without completing each section. It is up to you how you respond to these questions. Generally, if the question does not raise problem, answer it. If it does, you may want to use N/A or a dash. You may still be screened out using N/A and a dash, especially if there are too many non-responses on an application. Remember, be honest in your responses.

REFERENCES—References are an important part of your job search so choose them carefully. Do not just look for someone who is influential in the community or has a big title. Choose references that can honestly talk about your qualifications and contributions. Be sure to contact and talk to your references to get their permission.

There are four kinds of references. Employment references are former employers and direct supervisors. Professional references are people who worked with you and know you in your work environment, in volunteer organizations or professional associations. Academic references are teachers and others who can talk about your educational accomplishments. Personal references are people who know you socially. The employment and professional reference are the most valuable because they can discuss your qualifications.

ADDITIONAL APPLICATION TIPS—If possible take the application home so you won't be rushed while completing it or print an online application to fill in by hand before completing it online. This is especially helpful if you have trouble with spelling and grammar (it gives you the opportunity to seek help). Use an erasable pen, or keep handy a bottle of correction fluid for fixing errors. Keep your "Master Application" with you to complete paper and online applications. Use a dictionary and double check grammar, spelling and content.